

PRESS RELEASE

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DISASTER UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE NOW AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY ROYAL GORGE WILDFIRE

Work search may be waived for claimants affected by the fire

(DENVER) –The Colorado Department of Labor and Employment announced today that individuals who have become unemployed because of the Royal Gorge Wildfire in June may be eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), a federal program that provides temporary financial assistance to workers and self-employed individuals who have lost their jobs because of a disaster and who do not qualify for regular unemployment benefits.

A Major Disaster Declaration was issued for the Royal Gorge Wildfire by the President on July 26. With this declaration, individuals may now be eligible for unemployment assistance if their unemployment resulted from the physical damage or destruction of their place of employment or because of the physical inaccessibility of the worksite due to its closure by the federal, state or local government in immediate response to a wildfire.

Claims can be filed at www.coloradoui.gov

In addition, the Department of Labor and Employment is announcing that individuals who are currently receiving unemployment benefits while living in the burn area will receive a waiver from their requirement to seek work beginning the week the fire began in their area. The start date for the Royal Gorge Wildfire was June 11, 2013.

These individuals must continue requesting payment of unemployment benefits as they always have. As long as the fire is the only circumstance that is preventing them from looking for work, they should report that they are able to work, available and looking for work.

Some claimants impacted by the fire may currently be receiving Emergency Unemployment Compensation, federal benefits that go beyond the regular 26 weeks. Individuals receiving EUC benefits must complete a series of reemployment services within six weeks. However, for the

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immediate future, the Department of Labor and Employment is extending the amount of time in which those claimants must complete the services.

If individuals lost their jobs because of the wildfire and are eligible for regular UI, they should apply for those regular unemployment benefits. Most people who were employees at a business impacted by the Royal Gorge Wildfire are likely eligible for regular UI.

DUA is available only to those individuals who wouldn't otherwise be eligible for regular unemployment benefits. These individuals will typically be self-employed individuals who don't meet the "employment" qualifications (e.g., ranchers, farmers, in-home day care providers, etc.) or individuals who don't have enough wage history but can prove that they were working or were scheduled to begin work on or after the date of the fire and now cannot perform that work any longer.

If eligible, unemployment benefits are normally available for up to 26 weeks beginning the week following the Presidential disaster declaration. Additional weeks may be payable during the period between the incident starting date (June 11) and the formal Presidential declaration. When able to return to employment or self-employment, benefits will stop.

Applications must be filed by August 26, 2013 to be considered timely, unless the individual has good cause for late filing.

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